

As a librarian who follows congressional documents, I see a lot of publications cross my desk. Some look interesting, some seem pretty routine, and some force me to stop what I'm doing and get lost for an hour in new information. That happened to me recently when a coworker mentioned an update of Senate Print 112-31 covering the cloture rule from 1917 to 2008.

Now, I'm certainly used to finding things interesting as a documents librarian that I know would not be of enough interest to warrant a blog post but the cloture rule and the associated notion of the filibuster have become an increasingly visible part of our legislative process. Whether it's through increasing political news consumption or political dramatizations like *The West Wing* episode, "The Stackhouse Filibuster," and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, the American public has become fascinated with this particular piece of our legislative process. (For those who aren't familiar with the distinction, filibuster can be any act meant to slow or halt approval of a bill and cloture is the formal procedure used to end debate and bring the bill to a vote).

Anyway, this updated Senate print contains a wealth of information on the subject and is a great starting place for any documents librarians looking to brush up on procedural rules, historians researching Senate history, students in classes like Civics, or members of the American public with questions about things they're hearing in the news. It begins with a list of the current rules for extending or ending debate on a bill and follows with a history of cloture from its early roots in the English parliamentary system to the present day. A section on "outstanding filibusters" contains many notable filibusters but, more interestingly, contains a thorough explanation of the filibuster which debunked my long-held knowledge of the subject – I had always thought of the filibuster as it was portrayed in movies and TV i.e. one man standing and talking for hours, but learned that many different actions can be considered a filibuster. Senators can even filibuster while insisting that they are not!

Unlike the loose nature of the filibuster, cloture is a specific procedural move which makes possible the fourth section of this Senate Print – and my favorite section – a comprehensive record of every motion for cloture from 1917 to 2008 including disposition and, wherever a vote took place, a cross-reference with the daily Congressional Record. Finally, the print contains a fantastic bibliography of the cloture rule that will assist any librarian pulling materials for students, historians, journalists, or other library users.

With all this material, this committee print (or Senate print) is long (231 pages) but I'd definitely find space for it on my ready-reference shelf. Of course, for people who prefer their content digitally, this print is available as an authenticated [PDF](#) through FDsys, GPO's Federal Digital System. Cataloging will be provided for microfiche, and is currently available for print and electronic formats through the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications (

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